2012 Halibut Seasons Provide Extra Fishing Days on Puget Sound

Local News

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Posted on : March 23, 2012 at 4:51 am

Olympia, WA - Sportfishing seasons for halibut will be four days longer in Puget Sound, and more fish will be available for harvest early in the season off the state’s southern coast under catch quotas for 2012 adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission.Although the state’s recreational catch quota is down slightly from last year, Puget Sound anglers will get an extra day to catch the big flatfish during the Memorial Day weekend and three additional days during the course of the season.That is a welcome change after three successive years of cutbacks in fishing time designed to prevent that fishery from exceeding its catch quota, said Heather Reed, coastal policy coordinator for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)."We’ve worked very hard to stabilize the Puget Sound fishery in recent years, and we finally achieved that goal," Reed said. "Last year’s catch actually fell short of the quota by more than 11,600 pounds, which makes us confident we can restore some of that lost fishing time."This year’s catch quota for Puget Sound is 57,393 pounds, with an additional 156,717 pounds distributed among three coastal fisheries.

Another change this year is that 80 percent of the quota for recreational halibut fishery in Marine Area 1 off the Columbia River will be allocated to the early season that begins May 3. In past years only 70 percent was dedicated to the early season, with 30 percent reserved for the late season in August."This change will make more of the quota available during the early season, when that area attracts the highest number of anglers," Reed said.In all marine areas open to fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two fish in any form, and must record their catch on a WDFW catch record card.2012 Puget Sound halibut seasonsMarine Area 5: From May 24-28, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31 through June 23, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 23 as the opening day of the 2013 season.Marine Areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10: From May 3-19, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. From May 24-28, the fishery will be open each day (Thursday through Monday) for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31-June 2, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 2 as the opening day of the 2013 season.Marine Areas 11, 12, 13: These areas will remain closed to halibut fishing this year to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.2012 Pacific Coast halibut seasonsMarine Area 1 (Columbia River): Opens May 3, three days per week (Thursday-Saturday) until 80 percent of the quota is achieved, or until July 14, whichever is earlier. The fishery will reopen Aug. 3 and continue three days per week (Friday-Sunday), until the remaining quota is taken, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The early quota is 9,516 pounds; the late quota is 2,379 pounds.Marine Area 2 (Westport): Opens May 6, two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) for three consecutive weeks. The area-wide fishery will be closed May 27 and 29. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will open the following Sunday and/or Tuesday and continue until the quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The northern nearshore area will open May 6 and continue seven days per week until the nearshore quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The quota for the area-wide fishery is 40,739 pounds; the quota for the northern nearshore fishery is 2,000 pounds.

Marine Areas 3 and 4 (La Push and Neah Bay): Opens May 10, two days per week (Thursdays and Saturdays) through May 19. If enough harvestable fish remain to be catch the fishery will re-open May 31 and/or June 2 and possibly on additional days (Thursdays and Saturdays) until the quota is reached or Sept. 28, whichever occurs first. The combined quota for both areas is 108,030 pounds.In Marine Areas 1-4, the seasons will continue until the subarea quotas are reached.